Fab's own private PANTO

It was when we first planned this F.A.B Pantomime that we gathered up masses of costumes. And there happened to be hanging around, all casual like, The Beatles came to visit us just before Christmas. The boys were in fine form. And a good time being had by all . . . read on!

BETTY, Fab's assistant Ed, and I looked at each other. The same positively brilliant thought had struck us at the same time. "Would they, do you think?" Betty said.

So clearing my throat I grabbed Paul, charmer, charming, delish Paul of the great big flirty eyes, and said: "Ummm. How would you boys like to stage a bit of a panto for us?"

"Eh?" he said—so I just pointed to the costumes hanging on the wall.

Now if there's one thing that working on FAB for over a year has taught me, it's that all pop stars are little boys at heart. Give 'em something to play around with; something to dress up in; something to DO, and they're happy as my dog, Fred, when he's given a great big bone.

Paul's eyes lit up.

"What have you got there?" he said.

I explained there was a Dick Whittington outfit, Dick's cat, one of the three bears, Aladdin the Genie, the Dame and Cinderella.

"Bags I the cat," he said happily grabbing it.

"It's more Ringo's size," Betty said.

He turned those irresistible eyes on her. "I *want* to be the cat," he said.

Betty capitulated.

Ringo appeared on the scene.

"What's that?" he said.

"A cat costume," said Paul, rapidly leaping into it to save any arguments.

"I'd like to be the cat," Ringo said wistfully. "Still—what else is there?"

"Dick Whittington, Aladdin, a Dame, Cinderella, the Genie—a bear," Betty told him.

Ringo had been shaking his head, brown eyes mournful until she mentioned the bear, and then that splendid smile that so completely changes his face appeared.

"The bear!" he said. "That's for me. I've got one more photograph to be taken—" he was gathering up the bear costume and shoved it into my arms—"Now, don't you let anyone else pinch it. It's mine."

When George appeared, our Margaret decided it was time for tact, just in case he was on an animal kick, too.

"You be Dick Whittington," she said, waving a pair of thigh-high swashbuckling boots at him. "You'll make a marvellous Dick Whittington."

"Okay," said George who is never very chatty, and started climbing into the costume.

John, ever the individualist, decided that the other boys had pinched the best things and made himself look splendidly Oriental with a curious mixture of the Aladdin and Genie costumes.

All dressed up, they pranced around the photographic studio, Ringo growling a bit behind his enormous bear mask.

"That'll have to go," I said firmly. "No one will be able to see your face."

"Don't want to take it off." Ringo's voice was all muffled and bearish from behind the head. "Like it this way." And he vanished and stood in a corner with his back to us all.

Coaxing was required. I opened up the bear jaws, peered in, pulled a face at him and said: "Aw, come-on, Ringo. We *want* to see your face."

Long moment of hesitation, and then: "Okay," said Ringo, and pulled off the head, stroking its bonce regretfully.

After that, everything went mad.

"You really ought to have a sword with that outfit," Betty said to John, and he seized a huge carving knife (intended strictly for cake cutting) and solemnly began to clean his nails with it. Ugh!

Paul found a plate, pinched some of John's milk, and down on hands and knees did the full pussy-cat bit. "Ah-ah!" said John gleefully and with one stroke of the knife cut off Paul's tail. (What the costumers will say, heaven only knows)

George took a fancy to this Dick Whittington shirt.

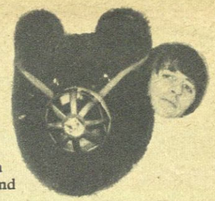
"Ow!" said Paul, in mock pain, clutching his nether-regions, while John used the tail as a makeshift whip.

By this time the photographer could hardly take his pictures for laughing. I'll say one thing for The Beatles, they respond to an audience. The more we all laughed, the more they fooled around.

John got down to the saucer of milk. He was figuring it was his anyway. One of the boys grabbed his turban from his head, so John pinched someone else's head-gear, and they started swopping bits of their costume all around.

"I think I'd rather have been the bear," said George, snatching the head piece from Ringo and shoving his be-feathered hat over Ringo's fringe.

Alas, all good things have to come to an end. Tony Barrow, the boy's publicity man, was looking at his watch. They had another appointment and were already an hour late.



Reluctantly they stripped back down to their shirts and trousers again.

"Where's my jacket?" demanded Ringo.

I'd carefully hung it over a chair. "Thanks," said Ringo, putting it back on with the air of a man who likes to look after his clothes.

"I do like this Dick Whittington shirt," George was muttering. "I'd like one just like it in real suede. Do you think anyone could make me one like it in real suede?"

I promised him I'd get someone to do it.

"Could you really?" he said. "Gosh, I'd love a shirt just like this."

It was a Dick Whittington traditional, with fullish sleeves coming tight at the wrists, lacing up the front.

"But perhaps it ought to have a collar."

"Can be done," I told him. "Just send me one of your own shirts for size."

"I will. You won't forget will you?" he said, vanishing to fight his way through more people than Fleetway House has ever seen outside before, held back by a bunch of friendly coppers.

Ed Unity playing peek-a-boo with Ringo.

Paul said thank you to everyone in sight. Ringo took one last look at the bear's head, and gathered up a car spring he's appropriated from the studio props (what could he want it for?). John came rushing back for his bag of apples and bananas and took a last quick swig of milk. And George was still yelling back over his shoulder—"You won't forget the shirt, will you?"

We haven't, George. Honest. But you forgot to send one of you own shirts for size. Just send it along, mate—and you can be Dick Whittington any time you like.

THE EDITOR

George can't 'bear' it. John's decided to be the cat 'cos Paul won't go down on all fours and Ringo's put on Dick Whittington's hat!